



Sergey (right) pictured with Latha Sambamurti, Redmond Arts Commission, and the Adefua music and dance performers.

SPOTLIGHT on YOUTH

Many Hats of Caring

Sergey Smirnov is one young man who really knows what it is to show concern and caring for others in his community. At eighteen, Sergey has contributed over 2,500 volunteer hours to human services in Redmond, which is more than many adults give in a lifetime. Originally from Russia, Sergey's family relocated to Redmond when his Dad was offered a position at Microsoft seven years ago.

"Sergey has worn many hats in the Parks and Recreation department as well as in the Redmond community since he came here," says Parks and Recreation's Cindy Johnson. "He started in Parks and Recreation volunteering in the arts, and was later hired as an After School Program Staff and Day Camp Leader. He's enthusiastic, outgoing and has a passion for life."

Most recently, Sergey's senior project involved working with Boredom Busters, a new "School's Out" program for

children ages six to twelve years. He created a logo for the program and helped develop a marketing plan. He also co-chaired the Andrews Housing Group auction to raise money for housing needs and has volunteered at Little Bit Therapeutic Riding Centers working with troubled and disabled kids. Most recently, he was the Redmond/Kirkland Relay for Life entertainment chair and lead fund raising organizer for the event at Redmond High School. This year, Sergey raised over \$1,600 for cancer research. He plans to continue working with the event and hopes to raise even more next year.

When asked why he is so actively involved in his community, Sergey explains. "When we first came here from Russia, I had the summer blues, so I walked into City Hall and volunteered

to work with the Arts Commission. I liked the experience, so

I've kept volunteering. I also got involved with Relay for Life because my mom is a cancer survivor. Now it's become my purpose in life to be involved in the community."

Sergey's future aspirations include plans to study Community and Environmental Planning, with an advanced degree in Public Affairs. He's also planning to join the Peace Corps. "I want to help re-build other nations, do grassroots government work or open homeless shelters locally or internationally. I'm the kind of person who wants to do it all."

When asked what he'd like to do when he settles on a career, Sergey exclaims, smiling broadly, "I'm visionary and creative. I'd really like to be Redmond's mayor." It's quite possible, if he continues on the path he's started, he just could achieve that goal someday.

Role Playing Teaches Life Skills

By Whitney Huntley, Communications Intern

It's the middle of the school day at Redmond Elementary, but with a word from the teacher, the second-graders clear their desks. Junior Achievement volunteer Kelly Mills enters the room carrying a colorful box. Under her guidance, the second-graders become donut company employees in heavy competition. Eight students are government workers, and one is a tax collector (and not the most popular student of the day). Here, the rosy world of play in which anything is possible, collides with the challenging reality of strategy and consequences. The kids have fun role-playing with paper "donut" game pieces, as they learn about production and teamwork and get a hands-on glimpse at how a business is run.

Junior Achievement lessons are interactive and applicable to life. The lessons were developed to inspire kids in elementary through high school and to equip them with practical life skills, as well as teach them the impact of free enterprise, business and economics. They include economic simulations like the donut-making competition, catchy raps reminiscent of Schoolhouse Rock, job shadows and practical job skills development. Volunteers, including parents, local business professionals and even high-school students, are the teachers. The lessons fulfill social studies requirements; supplement reading, writing, economics and math; and are well-received by classroom teachers and schools.

As leaders and role models from the world beyond the school walls, volunteers bring an outside perspective into the classroom. The time-commitment is relatively small. After receiving a two-hour training session, volunteers teach prepared lessons for elementary, middle or high schools. "If you think about it, kids have a major impact on the spending habits of their household," notes Laura Mason, JA Secondary Programs in King County. "The decisions of a young person equipped and empowered with an appreciation for how the economy operates will have far-reaching consequences. In just five to eight classroom visits, Junior Achievement provides an opportunity for parents and community members to invest powerfully in kids' lives."



As further incentive to prospective volunteers, teaching itself is rewarding. Junior Achievement volunteer Sabrina Chen, who is still a student herself, plans to become an elementary school teacher. "I was afraid kids would not be interested in the topics I was discussing and tune me out," says Chen. She was surprised to see that the kids enjoyed learning about business. For Chen, building a relationship with the students was the greatest reward to volunteering. "I was given a book of thank yous from all the kids—I will probably keep the book 'till I retire," she says.

Most rewarding for Mills was experiencing the diversity of Redmond students. "I think the volunteers get just as much out of it as the kids do," Mills exclaims. "It's a good chance to share personal experience." Those interested in volunteering with Junior Achievement should contact Director Megan Sun McIntosh at 206-296-2601, or at megan@jawashington.org.

Be a Buddy

For the past fourteen years Redmond Elementary has made a difference with students needing positive recognition and individual attention. The school's Lunch Buddy Program matches caring adults from the community with elementary students. Adults use the hour in a number of ways with kids. They eat lunch together, read in the library, work on art projects, assist in the computer lab, play board games, get active at the gym, walk around the school or enjoy recess together.

Students benefit in many ways. They develop a special, healthy relationship with a caring adult friend who listens, talks and laughs with them without judgment. This positive interaction with an adult greatly enhances their self-esteem. With higher self-esteem, their success in school, attendance, as well as their relationships with peers and other adults improves. Adults benefit too. They get a new friend. "It's a wonderful way to make a positive difference in the life of a child", says Lunch Buddy Coordinator Linda Package. Residents interested in volunteering with the Lunch Buddy Program must commit to one lunch per week during the school year, be comfortable talking with elementary age children and have an appreciation for challenges faced by kids. A willingness to be confidential with students is also essential. For more information, call 425-702-3419, or e-mail lpacage@lwsd.org. In addition to the program at Redmond Elementary, there are twelve other Lunch Buddy Programs in Lake Washington School District. For information about these, contact the district office at 425-702-3300 or visit www.lkwash.wednet.edu.